

studio
PROMETHEUS



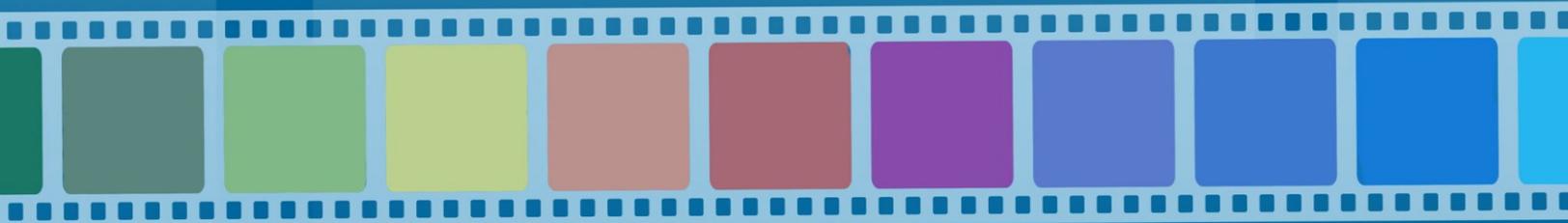
qqstudio
vidíme film

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czech animation

FROM OSTRAVA



Czech animation from Ostrava

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Prologue

Ostrava thanks in no small part to black coal was predestined to become a mining and industrial city. The region was settled by people, that either extracted this „black gold“ from the mine pits or processed it at the foundries and smelting works.

The taste and need, innate in all people for the aesthetic leads to creation and further artistic Stimuli. After a hard working day, people need to turn their minds to the more expressive aspects of their character, but whatever rate of human work and production in any dialectical relation can be considered, the fact is, that Ostrava started to give birth to actors, artists, musicians, journalists and other creators with tight relation to artistic production. Ostrava has become their home, Perhaps to some not the most aesthetically, in the classical sense, pleasing place in the whole world, in time she instilled in the hearts of her citizens the ambivalent character of an industrial city and also a centre for cultural events in the region, with huge potential for artistic and cultural inspiration and aspiration.

This city bears the profound mark of a genius loci due to its underground richness and the hidden power of the smelting-works, where the captivating architectural beauty of factories and head-frames spring forth in the surface, creating the rugged topography of the Ostravians living space. The artistic oeuvre here has always drawn its power and flavour from the black industry, in the same way as alchemists did at the workshops that they established in the monumental spaces of the cathedrals. Galleries of fine art, theatres, museums, TV studios, many cultural centres, clubs and cafés sprouted in the middle of the shafts and factories all over Ostrava, with gatherings, authorial readings and concerts taking place on them. The City's fundamental heart of culture and artistic life pulses strongly yet

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Prométheus 1971-1991

The Studio's creation

The Idea of starting to make animation film in the biggest city in the North of Moravia and Silesia originated during the 70's in the last century. At that time „animák,, was only in Prague and in Gottwaldov (Zlín), but soon there after everything changed.

In 1969 big changes occurred regarding the leadership and organization inside Krátký film studios in Prague. Kamil Pixa became the general director, that markedly made the decision of developing production inside KF also in the area of animated creation. In Prague, he created among others, the experimental studio Prométheus, that should also serve as platform to fulfil his own artistic ambitions. At the Prométheus workshop, Hájek, Pixa and Kábrt directed projects inspired by antiquity – „Erotovy šípy“ (Eros arrow), „Perseus“, „Příběhy Odysseovy“ (Tales from the Odyssey), „Eros a Psyché“ (Eros and Psyche). Production in the studio was assured by Václav Strnad, and mostly because of his efforts and the creation of more successful projects as Václav Mergl's short films or the feature sci-fi, „Divoká planeta“ (Fantastic planet), a Czech-French co-production in which Josef Kábrt with René Kalous long time collaborators, . In the end of 70's production of Prague's Prométheus slowly went down and his name was moved to North Moravia.

In the beginning of 1971, Karel Pixa was invited by KNV KSČ (the regional people's committee of the the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) representatives to move to Ostrava. Leading authorities of the party showed interest in creating a branch of Krátký film studios in Ostrava. They wanted to satisfy the needs of production of instructive and propaganda films from this industrial region and also ensure working opportunities for the people that finished their studies in the area of graphic arts and film. The final KNV's decision to establish Krátký film Ostrava lead to the closing of the industrial film studios Třinecké železářny, that previously held the monopoly in Czechoslovakia's state films. Třinec film-makers got back up from Krátký film's leadership, mostly from the head of production František Kopecký, that went to Třinec with a proposal of buying back the studio and take over

its production with Krátký film. However Miroslav Boublík, head of Třinecké železářny defied Krátký film and stood against the request to sell the technical equipment from its studio. Třinec film makers in the end listened to Jindřich Gold, head of the industry labour union of KNV. He decided to create 12 working places at the new film studio in order to assure the amelioration of the cultural area in the region. Now, only the settlement of an agreement with the direction of Krátký film was needed, together with a space to settle in, in order to start the real beginning of the new studio.

The agreement was signed on May the 10th 1971, after a successful meeting with the direction of KF. Deputies from the regional KSČ issued the official invitations for a first press conference on the occasion of the creation of the new KF studios in Ostrava. Members of the city's committee from KSČ, the National committee and also deputies of the regional company for film, concerts and entertainment in Ostrava were present. Official news from the press dealt with the social meaning of the new studio to the region of North Moravia and should trigger interest in the first outcome from its production, that should in the near future fulfil the cultural life of the Ostrava region, regarding projection and television broadcast.

Unlike in the establishment of Prague's Barradov studios or Kudlov studios in Gottwaldov, the urban registration office in Ostrava didn't take to much in consideration a location to settle the workshop of the new studio. The first floor of a house located on Lidových milicí square (today Masaryk square) should be enough to fulfil the needs of Krátký film.

Spaces were limited, the eventual growth of production wasn't considered and the workers shouldn't bother with the external activity in the heart of the city. Only one floor, that the studio employees should set and maintain by themselves, had to serve both for the production workshops and administrative offices.

As forementioned, when production at Prague's Prométheus studios almost dissolved, Kamil Pixa decided to bring his project to Ostrava.

“Animation film was separated on 3 studios. In one work Trnka, the second was for Bratři v triku and Prométheus was the 3rd. The studio for puppet films was renamed Studio Jiřího Trnky, after the death of Trnka. Bratři v triku maintained their name and they had a lot of pleasure that no one could understand it except them (Bratři v triku translates literally to Brothers in T-shirt but the word Triku can also be a professional slang for the

animation stand), and the name Prométheus I created myself. The idea that the new studio in Moravia should be called Prométheus came to mind when – in the time when studio was settling – was researching in Ostrava. Iron mills impress me a lot. The light and strength of blast furnaces -it was Prométheus.” commented Kamil Pixa on his decision. The name of the hero of antiquity, that brings fire to the people, was given to the studio only in the year of 1978. Until that time it was only an unnamed Ostrava branch of Krátký film studios.

From science-industrial films to ateliers of animation production

In the beginning, the main goal of Ostrava's Krátký film studios was to produce commissioned instructional and advertising films for the industries in North Moravia. Instructional and reportage films should aim either to train new workers at the industrial companies and in education for High-School students on specialized training, or to inform the general public about progress and exploration of new technologies in the production. Their production provided by Lubomír Lukáš, Jaroslav Gajda and Jaromír Mayer, became the first Works of the Ostrava studio. Thanks to their experience at the industrial film studios in Třinec, the qualification of this trio of film makers to direct these film productions was never questioned. They not only assured Krátký Film Ostrava its original duty, but they also assumed the responsibility for producing quality shots.

At that time, Krátký film studios in Prague began to make full time most of the demanding animation production for Czech television. Director of KF Kamil Pixa didn't want to loose these contracts, and for that reason when establishing the new branch in Ostrava, he personally stipulated that animation production should also take place there. The Ostrava studio should be at same time an educational centre for animators that were able to realise this kind of production. The newly settled studio was limited only for the creation of graphics for instructional films. For this the studio had it's own workplace with a frame-by-frame photographic machine and it became the key element in the plan of settling animation production independently . From idea to realization it was still far. Two years would pass before Ostrava studio produce their first animation film. It is worth mentioning however that series were preferred rather than stand alone productions as Pixa's financial policy limited Ostrava's animation production with strong borders for a long time.

Irena Sitařová became the soul of schedule planning and financial administration from first moment of existence of the studio – A woman with a great organisation potential, that moved to KF from Czechoslovakian TV and as worked as head of administrative production studio until 1992.

“For the purpose that was traced in the beginning, Ostrava studio needed people that had creative talent and at the same time technical thinking for graphic production, because many directors made extremely precise films, for example in the field of medicine. Often was needed a vivid representation through the medium of graphic treatment, it was however animated and it was made with a camera for animated film. The animation department Ostrava was very much in the same situation as the ateliers Zlín (Gottwaldov) in post-war time, where settling a studio of animated graphs make possible to preserve film production.” recalls Irena Sitařová on the beginning of the studio.

Miloš Volák would also take care of production of animation in Ostrava. When he assumed the studio administration, he invited someone from the animation department at KF in Prague to collaborate. Jan Vašek would be delegated, accepting the supervision of the animation production workshop. “Vašek was an artist and animator at Bratři v tříku studios, he passed through this studio's school and he was able to come to work in Ostrava from maybe one week and teach new people that we employed. They were artists, painters and other talented people that were close with animation. Vašek was bringing from Prague foils and another needed materials. Above all, we made money with our own work, because all orders of surrounding companies and TV were paid to KF. Because of that the first project of young adepts of animation could be paid from financial exempt on their education. It was an advertising film, that passed behind the studio Windows.

Little after Jan Vašek joining in, a contest for places for artists and animators at the studio was announced. Vašek picked up his new employees personally and also administrated their skills. The contestants were challenged to animate a draughtsman dummy with an umbrella, that they should give him expressions of happiness and anger. Jaromír Černý, Eva Šrámková, Ivana Kratochvílová a Elen Kosová were the ones that proved to be the best sense for movement and acting with volumes at that time.